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OTES ON THE LIFE AND GENIUS OF BERNARDINO LUINI.

The student of Italian Art returning to Italy along the beautiful shores of Maggiore with mind filled with the grandeur of Alpine scenes, on passing the little town of Luino, has his thoughts suddenly turned by the sound of its name, from Nature to Art. By the

name which he assumed according to the custom of the time, we may believe that Bernardino Luini was here born and perhaps also made the little lake town his home. One longs to know how passed the life of this painter of serene beauty. But we know little more than nothing. The mists of four centuries are not once lifted. Archives are silent. Even the record of his birth and of his death are wanting. Vasari, to whom, in spite of destructive criticism, we owe so great a debt of gratitude, has nothing for us but the bare mention of his name; not, as one writer has conjectured, in contempt, but simply because he had nothing to tell. Later writers have recovered no anecdote or tradition in regard to him. We have, therefore, to look to the works which he has left us, the frescoes still in place or collected at Milan, for all we would know of him. And here, fortunately, time has been more considerate. Few painters of this central period of the Renaissance have left us so long a list of noble works, and in still fewer cases is the material for study to be found so closely gathered together in the land of its birth. If the traveler will land at Luino, take the road to Lugaon (and great will be his pleasure, by the way), thence south to Legnano and Saronno to Milan, he may see all that is finest of the painting of Luini. The most obvious fact made clear in the contemplation of his work, that which first strikes one, is the influence of Leonardo da Vinci; his personality is inseparably linked with that influence. Whether he worked as a pupil in the academy of Leonardo at Milan is nowhere recorded. Be this as it may, it is probable that the direct connection was short. The men who were most closely identified with Leonardo have been, like Salaino, content to sink their own individuality in that of the master. As a supplement to his genius the position of Luini is of unique interest. And the role is no mean one. Many great painters of the first order have had followers and imitators, more often than not but weak dilutions of the same spirit. To few indeed of these has it been given to supply what was lacking in the master mind. Though his manner and type of

beauty so closely resemble that of Leonardo as to frequently cause the work of the follower to be assigned to the master. Luini was no slavish imitator, but rather the child of his genius. Yet it would be a mistake to limit our appreciation of Luini to this relation to Leonardo. His gift of colour, pure as the waters of his own lake, is all his own. And it is this exquisite gift of his which to some minds will constitute the principal charm of his work. Fine and true though his feeling for beauty and flow of line will always be found, his composition is sometimes awkward. But in colour he never strikes a false note, and I cannot conclude these observations without referring to a fragment of fresco (No. 41) among the many treasures from his hand preserved in the Brera, pearly, opalescent in its exquisite blending of tints, a gem, and perhaps the more beautiful to us for the loss of its setting.

HAROLD BROADFIELD WARREN.

BERNARDINO LUINI, the most celebrated master of the Lombard school of painting, was born at Luino, a village on the Lago Maggiore, near the year 1465.

A pupil of Stefano Scotto and of the Academy of Milan directed by Leonardo Da Vinci, he became so thoroughly imbued with the style of Leonardo that until a comparatively recent date he has not been credited with the production of his own works, many of which have been assigned to Leonardo, and bear his name.

His works are full of grace and beauty, and seem the natural manifestation of his serene, contented and happy mind. Among his most celebrated paintings are—the Christ disputing with the Doctors, and the pictures of Vanity and Modesty, also the half length figure of the Infant Baptist playing with a lamb in the Ambrosian Gallery at Milan, and the Herodias in the Tribune of the Uffizi at Florence.

The remarkable and beautiful picture of the Madonna between Saint Catherine and Saint Barbara in the Esterhazy Gallery at Vienna, although bearing the name of Leonardo, was undoubtedly painted by Luini.

The Ambrosian library, the Brera, and many private collections in Milan, are rich in his works. The Monastero Maggiore (S. Maurizio) is a noble treasure-house of Luini's work.

The walls of the chapel from wainscot to roof are covered with masterly frescoes and many remarkable single figures of great beauty. The Hermitage at St. Petersburg contains several of his works, most beautiful of which is the portrait

of a young woman known under the several names of La Columbine, Flora, and Vanity. Clothed in a white robe broidered with yellow, which leaves bare the left breast, she smilingly gazes upon a cluster of columbine flowers which she holds in her left hand. A blue mantle falls from the right shoulder, and in her right hand is a spray of white jasmine. A wealth of Venetian red hair crowns her beautiful head. This exquisite picture was formerly attributed to Leonardo Da Vinci. In 1649 it was in the cabinet of Marie de Médicis, and later in the gallery of the Duc d'Orléans.

It belonged successively to M. Udney and to the bankers Walckers and Danvot, at Brussels, from whom it passed to William II., King of the Netherlands, who paid for it the sum of 40,000 florins. An old copy, somewhat changed, belonging to Sir Thomas Baring at Stratton, came probably from the gallery of King Charles I. of England.

Another copy, attributed to Andrea Solaris, is in the gallery of the Duke of Sutherland, Stafford House, London.

Kügler says of Luini that "although he rarely rises to the greatness and freedom of Leonardo, he has a never-failing tenderness and purity, a cheerfulness and sincerity, a grace and feeling which give an elevated pleasure to the student of his works.

They possess a loving, self-withdrawn quality of expression which gives them a peculiarly religious grace—"not ecclesiastical unction, but the devoutness of the heart."

In his later paintings he developed a noble and mature strength. His death occurred about 1530.

C. R. A.

If in the work of Leonardo da Vinci we may read, as in an indelible mirror, all the delicate and unearthly wisdom, all the dim wonder and foreknowledge of sad, strange things to be that lay like a curious twilight over the last great century of the middle age, so in the kindred work of Bernardino Luini we are enabled to read the converse of this time. In it there is nothing of the half wistful, half sinister forebodings of da Vinci, but only the delicate love of life and light and sensitive beauty which came as the fruition of that noble influence we call mediævalism. With the malign power commonly known as the Renaissance, neither the work of Luini nor of da Vinci, nor, indeed, of any of the cinquecentists, has any kinship. It was itself the culmination of mediævalism, and full of honour and preciousness. Distorted, perverted and degraded, it indeed served as the foundation of the "High Renais-

sance," but in so serving it was only as a noble tendency warped away from honour and distinction. But in the first fair days when the forgotten graces of paganism were coveted and acquired as desirable ornaments to Christian civilization, life was very beautiful, and thought and fancy: and it is this gracious life, lit with the fair light of new-found beauty, of which Luini is the exponent. The austerity of mediævalism had yielded to the sweetness and fancy of a triumphant epoch, losing thereby nothing of its nobility but gaining something of gentleness and tranquility. It was an era of appreciation, of varied delight, and in the pictures of Luini, serene, sensitive, full of all graciousness of bodily beauty, is easily to be read the delight in all loveliness that characterized the century, that was shadowed only now and then by the strange misgivings one feels in the work of da Vinci and of Botticelli. Through all his life da Vinci seemed conscious of the doom that hung over his time, and this knowledge clouded all that he did, giving it a strange fascination that is irresistible. Botticelli and Pico della Mirandola came to the knowledge of this sad ending of the bright day even as they lived and worked, seeking at last in the cloister forgetfulness of implacable destiny. From the pictures of Luini it is easy to believe that this heavy wisdom never came to him, and that he lived until his death joyful, exulting in life and beauty, happily ignorant of the night that was close at hand.

R. A. C.

